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ABSTRACT

This document was developed as a result of 1993 and 1994 policy forums on strategies to address disproportionate representation of minority students in special education. Part 1 is a synthesis of major themes and recommendations resulting from the first forum. Part 2 is a prioritization of 35 recommendations arising from that forum. The following were the top-ranked recommendations: (1) prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and should precede a formal assessment; and (2) training should be provided to address learning needs and strengths of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in home-school collaboration. Part 3 is a summary of the second meeting which developed action plans for the high priority recommendations. Part 4 is a summary which notes continuing involvement of the Office of Special Education Programs. Appendices include listings of participants in the prioritization process and the forum, instruments used to prioritize recommendations, agenda of the 1994 forum, and a list of tips for effective prereferral. (Contains approximately 200 references.) (DB)

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DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:

A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Prepared for:

Office of Special Education Programs
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), there was widespread resistance to court-ordered desegregation, and by the mid 1960s there were accusations that districts were using special education classes as a smoke screen for segregation. It was in this context that concerns were first raised about disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in special education. Legal battles ensued and a myriad of litigation erupted in California, including *Johnson v. the San Francisco Unified School District* and the well-known *Larry P. v. Riles* cases in 1971. The former case charged that special education was a cover for segregation, and the latter was the first in a series of cases alleging cultural bias in assessment.

In 1968, Dunn brought the issue of disproportionate representation to the attention of the research community in his seminal article, *Special Education for The Mildly Retarded---Is Much of it Justifiable?* In this article, he documented disproportionate numbers of African American, American Indian, Mexican, and Puerto Rican students in classes for the mildly retarded and asserted that the proliferation of such classes raised serious educational and civil rights questions.

The level of public concern about the inappropriate placement of CLD students in special education is exemplified in the passage of P. L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975 (now the Individuals with Disabilities Act-IDEA). This Act contained provisions which require that the assessment process be nondiscriminatory in nature and that the instruments used to determine eligibility for special education services under the Act be free of cultural and racial bias. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 also required nondiscriminatory testing procedures.

Since 1975, numerous studies and surveys have verified persistent patterns of disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education. The question of whether disproportionality reflects discriminatory practices or a disproportionate number of learning difficulties is difficult to answer. Only a few cases of discrimination have been confirmed by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Education, but the relatively large number of CLD students in special education raises questions about the positive educational outcomes for all students in special education.

The literature holds a substantial body of knowledge on efforts to identify disproportionate representation of CLD students and the underlying reasons for this problem. The literature also contains recommendations to modify assessment procedures and school policy/practices, especially at the referral and placement stages. In spite of a notable literature, there is a paucity of material on systematic and comprehensive approaches for addressing this complex issue, including recommendations developed by key stakeholders that focus on strategies to promote resolutions at the national, state, and local levels.

Project FORUM Activities

In order to address continuing concerns about disproportionate representation and the need for strategies to correct this problem, the U.S. Department of Education-Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), through a contractual arrangement with Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), conducted a number of activities during 1993 and 1994.

The first activity was a Policy Forum, convened in June of 1993. The purpose of the Policy Forum was to promote a national dialogue on the complex issue of disproportionate representation. Participants included parents, advocates for CLD students, researchers, persons with state-level policymaking experience, individuals from the disability community, and representatives from Federal programs (e.g., OCR). The issues and recommendations raised at the Policy Forum can be found in the document entitled, *Disproportionate Participation of Students from Ethnic and Cultural Minorities In Special Education Classes and Programs: A Forum To Examine Current Policy* (September 21, 1993).

The second activity was an analysis of current state policies and practices designed to minimize or reduce inappropriate placement of CLD students in special education. The results of this analysis, conducted by Julia Lara from the Council of Chief State School Officers, are reported in the document entitled, *State Data Collection and Monitoring Procedures Regarding Overrepresentation of Minority Students In Special Education* (May 5, 1994).

The third activity was a review of the current research and theoretical positions on the topic of disproportionate representation, conducted by Beth Harry from the University of Maryland. The resultant document, entitled *The Disproportionate Representation of Minority Students in Special Education: Theories and Recommendations* (August 1, 1994), concludes with a set of recommendations geared toward the total restructuring of special education.

As part of Project FORUM's contractual obligations, the three activities described above were synthesized into one concise document entitled, *Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education: A Synthesis of Major Themes and Recommendations* (August 8, 1994). Out of this synthesis emerged a consolidated list of 35 recommendations for correcting the problem of disproportionate representation. These recommendations were then prioritized by a diverse group of 24 stakeholders from around the country. The two-part prioritization process and findings were summarized in the document entitled, *A Prioritization of Recommendations to Correct Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education* (October 19, 1994).

The highest priority recommendations then became the basis of the second Policy Forum on the topic of disproportionate representation, convened in August 1994. At this Policy Forum participants developed an action agenda for implementation of the two-highest ranked

recommendations. The proceedings of this forum can be found in the document entitled, *Disproportionate Representation of Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education: A Policy Forum To Develop Action Plans for Implementation of High Priority Recommendations* (November 22, 1994).

Purpose of this Document

Three of the six documents described above have been consolidated here under one cover for the purpose of general dissemination. There are as follows:

- *Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education: A Synthesis of Major Themes and Recommendations.*
- *A Prioritization of Recommendations to Correct Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education.*
- *Disproportionate Representation of Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education: A Policy Forum To Develop Action Plans for Implementation of High Priority Recommendations.*

Although these three documents accurately describe the individual activities, separately they do not present a comprehensive picture of the steps OSEP, through Project FORUM, has taken to address the problem of disproportionate representation of CLD students. This consolidated document represents OSEP's efforts during 1994 to continue its examination of disproportionate representation and to conduct activities which built on its previous endeavors. A wide array of stakeholders participated in the activities described in these pages. More detailed information about the stakeholders is included in the sections which follow.

The original documents have been included in their entirety, except for the Background and Summary sections. To avoid redundancy, these sections were combined for this consolidated document. In addition, a limited amount of editing was done to make the terminology more consistent.

This document is divided into four parts; 1) a synthesis of major themes and recommendations, 2) a prioritization of recommendations, 3) a policy forum to develop action plans for high priority recommendations, and 4) summary and next steps. A consolidated list of references and resources, and appendices are also included.

PART I

A SYNTHESIS OF MAJOR THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals reviewed and commented on an earlier draft of Part I. Their efforts are greatly appreciated by the Project FORUM staff. Our acknowledgement of these individuals does not necessarily indicate their endorsement of the consolidated document.

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A SYNTHESIS OF MAJOR THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Activity

The purpose of the synthesis was to present the major themes and recommendations from the three 1993 activities. Citations to references are not included in this synthesis; however, an extensive list of references and resources can be found at the end of this document. The terms "overrepresentation" and "underrepresentation" were used in the three 1993 documents to preserve the orientation of the original authors cited. In this synthesis the term "disproportionate representation" is used to refer to both types of representation.

Synthesis of Major Themes

State Collection and Use of Data

Although there is no Federal mandate to collect special education enrollment data by race/ethnicity, 32 states collect these data. Six of the 32 states use these data to monitor enrollment of CLD students, judge the adequacy of local practices, and conduct investigations of disproportionate representation. However, because there is no commonly agreed upon "standard" or formula for computing disproportionate representation, the criteria for determining disproportionality vary from state to state. The lack of consistent criteria and limited collection of disaggregated enrollment data, hinders the examination of disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education.

Another problem related to collection of disaggregated enrollment data is the commonly used racial and ethnic designations (e.g., African American, Hispanic). The people included in these groups are very heterogeneous and many have mixed cultural and/or racial heritage. Therefore, delimiting terminology is both inaccurate and misleading, and forces parents and children to declare one part of their heritage and reject other parts. Also, the term "minority," which is widely used to refer to non-White ethnic/racial groups, is an inaccurate descriptor in an increasing number of jurisdictions. In several of the largest states, so called "minority students" will be in the majority by 2010.

The six states that use disaggregated enrollment data to work with the districts on the issue of disproportionate representation do the following activities: (1) analyze the data, (2) notify the district of disproportionality, (3) require development of a corrective action plan, and (4) monitor implementation of the plan. These six states have a legislative or regulatory mandate to include disproportionality as a compliance item in their state monitoring procedures.

Technical assistance provided by the states to the districts on the issue of disproportionality varies from state to state, and some states are more prescriptive than others. However, technical assistance focuses on examination of the following:

- prereferral activities/strategies
- referral process
- evaluation practices
- evaluation reports
- placement
- programming
- support available in the classroom
- involvement of ethnically diverse staff in prereferral and referral activities

Consequences for not complying with the objectives of the corrective action plan may result in state legal action in two states and the district could lose funding. There are no specified sanctions in the other four states.

Eighteen states do not collect data by race/ethnicity and there is no Federal or State mandate to do so. In fact, in some states, there may be political pressures that discourage collection of disaggregated enrollment data.

Longitudinal examination of disaggregated special education enrollment data may not accurately depict the changes in ethnic/racial representation in special education because disability definitions and eligibility criteria have changed over time. This makes it difficult to determine the impact of monitoring and corrective action plans.

There have been concerns about how OCR has addressed the issue of disproportionate representation. Concerns have centered around data collection, investigation, and enforcement procedures.[1]

The Negative Effects of Poverty

Poverty is a societal ill which cannot be ignored when discussing disproportionate representation of minorities in special education. The 1960s "war on poverty" first brought attention to the fact that poverty and its concomitant problems (e.g., inadequate health care, poor nutrition, limited access to educational opportunities) contribute to learning problems and school failure. Because a larger proportion of CLD children live in poverty than other children, a disproportionate number of those students experience difficulty at all levels of the educational system. Learning problems and failure at school often result in a special education placement.

[1]OCR has a sampling procedure whereby special education enrollment data by ethnic/racial group is estimated. OCR conducts investigations based on these data and complaints filed.

In the 1960s, the effects of poverty were characterized as "cultural deprivation," but this characterization has come into disfavor because it reflects an insensitivity to the fact that poor people lack money, not culture. The recognition and acceptance of cultural differences is a profound step towards the appreciation of different cultures. The current view is that poor children are at an educational disadvantage because limited economic resources require that these families must often give priority to survival issues rather than educational ones. Although effective schools diminish the negative effects of poverty, unfortunately, in many communities, the poorest neighborhoods also have the poorest schools. Some researchers report that the quality of education for poor students is also tarnished by lower teacher expectations and less effective instructional interventions.

School Reform

School reform efforts are directed at improving educational results for all students. Our schools, being a reflection of society, often do not help facilitate the attainment of power and influence through education for poor, non-White, non-English speaking students. This may be due, in part, to lower educational expectations for CLD students. Power will not be redistributed in our society unless high expectations for all students become an integral part of school reform efforts.

Regardless of why CLD students are disproportionately represented in special education, there is little disagreement that these students have disproportionately greater educational difficulties. Part of the problem is thought to be the "deficit orientation," which is common in our schools. This orientation focuses on students' learning problems rather than building on students' strengths. School reform efforts propose to reverse this practice and find positive educational strategies for all children.

The quality of education for all children in our country is tarnished by insensitivity to socioeconomic and ethnic/racial diversity. Cultural, racial and linguistic diversity in our communities and schools is often not valued or celebrated. The school reform movement must truly become a crusade to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Assessment

Assessment is conducted to identify students' educational strengths and needs. However, there is widespread concern about cultural and linguistic bias of assessment instruments. Also, the professionals using these instruments may not be sensitive to the diverse cultural backgrounds and learning experiences of the students in our schools today. This lack of sensitivity may invalidate the assessment process. There may also be negative effects of the testing situation on students from cultures not accustomed to our educational institutions and testing methods. In light of these concerns about the assessment process, test results may be misinterpreted and misused.

The Disability Classification System

The purpose of identifying the disabilities of students is to insure that their educational needs are met. But disability labels are not always linked to educational needs, classroom instruction, and services. Also, the assignment of a disability classification is influenced by definition changes and shifting fads, as well as the subjective judgments of the educators involved. Funds also play a role because the classification of students as disabled brings money and extra services to the district, which in some districts, is a great incentive to label students.

Classifying low-achieving students as disabled often exempts them from district-wide testing programs. This, in effect, improves the school's testing profile and status in the eyes of the community. However, since a disproportionate number of CLD students are classified as disabled, these students are disproportionately being excluded from efforts to measure educational outcomes. This practice inflates the "success" of the school district's attainment of student accountability goals and camouflages the educational needs of CLD students.

Parent-School-Community Interactions

A family's ethnic and cultural background influences the educational expectations the adult members have of children and influences the family's relationship with the school. Although parent participation is mandated in the law (IDEA), participation is low for non-White and non-English-speaking parents. Some families do not know how to advocate for their children or feel comfortable in this role. In addition, educational institutions and administrative procedures are often intimidating and/or alienating to immigrant and culturally and linguistically diverse families.

The increasing diversity in our communities has given rise to local agencies, which are designed to address the unique needs of certain populations. Although many of these agencies are understaffed and operate on low budgets, they are valuable resources. The more established community agencies (e.g., health department, social services) are also serving our increasing diverse school populations. Unfortunately, schools and community agencies are <u>not working together</u> to serve families in the most comprehensive and efficient manner.

Continued Examination and Research

Questions remain about the short and long-term effectiveness of special education. For example, post-secondary outcomes for students coming out of special education are of concern. Data indicate that students with disabilities, and especially non-White students, are not prepared for the world of work. Although there is agreement on the need for more research on the effectiveness of special education, there is not agreement on how to best measure effectiveness and outcomes.

Recommendations

The Collection and Use of Data

The collection of special education enrollment data by gender, race and ethnicity should be expanded and/or required under Part B of IDEA. Guidelines for determining disproportionate representation of CLD students should be established by the Federal government, which can then be applied by the states when examining their disaggregated data. Monitoring systems should be in place at all levels to identify, investigate, and correct problems with disproportionality.

Funding to Address the Negative Effects of Poverty

Federal, state and local resources should be heavily weighted in favor of poor school districts. This would direct funds to where needs are the greatest. In addition, the funding structures of entitlement programs should be modified. For example, Chapter 1 funding should be increased and blended with special education funding to serve students with learning needs. There should also be a blending of the migrant education and bilingual funding to create a seamless system that minimizes stigmatization.

School Reform

All school reform initiatives should consider the cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of our school population. Multicultural education requires that classroom content and methods be relevant to <u>all</u> the students that make up the school population.

Schools should use grade clusters rather than annual promotions because children learn and develop at different rates. Such student groupings should be small in order to facilitate individualized teacher and paraprofessional support, and heterogenous in terms of abilities to facilitate learning as an interactional process.

Students with disabilities should attend their neighborhood schools. In order to make this work, special education, as a separate system of service delivery, must be replaced by a cadre of support services. These services should be provided to students and staff by special education personnel, who <u>must</u> continue to be a critical resource <u>in</u> the schools. Special education teachers and related service providers should collaborate with general educators to provide all services <u>within</u> the general education classroom. This would allow students with disabilities to go to school with children in their neighborhoods, and give schools better access to families and the community agencies that serve those families.

Measurable outcomes should be established for <u>all</u> children, including those with disabilities. This would help insure that all children, regardless of whether they are classified as disabled, are receiving a quality education.

Personnel Issues

Educators should be trained to address the learning strengths and needs of an increasing diverse student population. School-based teams should include personnel from diverse culturally and linguistically groups, with training in multicultural education. Such teams would enrich the learning experience for all students. School teams should also include personnel with training in English as a Second Language (ESOL), who would be available to support students struggling to master English along with new subject material. Every effort should be made to teach students in their native language.

Personnel should also be recruited who are motivated to work with poor students. These students have a unique set of learning strengths and needs, and the assignment of teachers interested in working with these students would enhance their learning experience.

In addition to cultural sensitivity and multicultural education, preservice and inservice training should include the following topic areas: prereferral strategies and parent/professional collaboration. Family members from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be considered as consultants for staff development programs.

Assessment

Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the education process. Such strategies should be available to service providers and implemented prior to the initiation of a formal assessment process.

When assessment is indicated, a collaborative team approach should be used. This team should include specialists--especially psychologists, speech therapists and counselors--who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as professionals proficient in the primary language of the student being assessed. Parents should also play a central role in the assessment process.

Criterion-referenced, as opposed to norm-referenced, tests should be used during the assessment process. This would help eliminate the bias which is inherent in tests normed on culturally and linguistically homogeneous student populations. In addition, assessment approaches that reflect a dynamic rather than a static view of intelligence and learning should be favored over traditional I.Q. testing.

The Disability Classification System

A non-categorical system of classification should be considered. Such a system should focus on the identification of student needs and the prescription of services to address those needs. This system should address the needs of all students, not just those with clearly definable disabilities.

Parent-School-Community Interactions

In order to encourage parent-school-community interaction, all school activities (e.g., conferences, meetings, presentations) should be scheduled around the availability of parents and other interested community residents. In addition, respecting diversity means that communication from schools, both written and oral, must be in languages of people in that community. State and Federal governments should be available to help local districts with the expenses incurred for translation.

Schools and community agencies must support and collaborate with each other in order to met the needs of an increasing diverse population. Schools should become resource centers for the entire community by offering an array of services, such as night courses for adults, family mentoring, and other family support services.

The involvement of parents and community representatives should be encouraged at all school levels, including school policymaking bodies. These policymaking bodies should reflect the diversity of the student population and the community at large.

Continued Examination and Research

Disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education is a problem reflecting societal and educational ills. For this reason, collaboration must continue between the U. S. Department of Education, stakeholders, and other experts if workable solutions are to be identified.

Research in the area of disproportionate representation must be disseminated to the field in an efficient and timely manner if it is to be used to drive problem solving and policy making in this area. Further research is necessary in the following areas: disproportionate representation in the mild disability groups, CLD students in low incidence categories, and evaluation of educational outcomes.

Every effort should be made to involve persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the review of research and demonstration grant applications to increase sensitivity to the needs of these groups in funded projects.

PART II

A PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Activity

The 35 recommendations, which emerged from the synthesis of major and themes and recommendations from the 1993 Project Forum activities, formed a comprehensive list of strategies for correcting the problem of disproportionate representation of CLD students. However, this list was not a practical tool for policy development because the recommendations were not prioritized in any way. For this reason, Project FORUM conducted a review and prioritization of the recommendations. This process and the results are described below.

Procedure

Project FORUM, in consultation with OSEP, identified 27 people from around the country to participate in a two-round modified Delphi Process. The participants were carefully selected to represent different perspectives on this issue of disproportionate representation. Participants included parents, advocates, researchers, and policy makers, as well as administrators at the local and state education agency level. The list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

The 35 recommendations were formulated into a set of succinct statements and grouped into the following topic areas:

- Data Collection and Monitoring
- Addressing the Issue of Poverty
- School Reform
- Personnel Issues
- Assessment
- Parent-School-Community Interaction
- Collaboration and Research

The resultant instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Part 1 of the prioritization process required participants to select 10 of the 35 recommendations which would most likely correct disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education. The recommendations selected most often by the participants were re-formulated into 10 recommendations. Recommendations were combined if they were similar in substance and selected at a similar rate by participants during Part 1 of the prioritization process.

Part 2 of the prioritization process required participants to rank order the ten recommendations from one to ten, one being the recommendation they would give the most priority. The Part 2 instrument can be found in Appendix C.

Twenty-four of the 27 participants responded to Part 1. The Part 2 instrument was sent to those 24 respondents. Twenty participants responded to the Part 2. Hereafter "participants" refers only to these 20 responding participants.

Findings

During Part 1 of the prioritization process, five recommendations were selected by more than half of the participants as priority solutions to the problem of disproportionate representation. They are as follows:

- Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment.
- Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population.
- Monitoring systems should be in place at the state and local levels to identify and investigate problems with disproportionality.
- Funding structures should be flexible to create a seamless system of services that minimizes stigmatization. For example, Chapter 1 and special education funding should be blended to serve students with learning needs.
- A non-categorical system of classification, which focuses on the identification of student needs and the provision of services to address those needs, should replace the current classification system.

Thirteen of the 35 recommendations were selected by at least one third of the participants as priority recommendations. These thirteen recommendations and the percentage of respondents who selected them, are presented in Table 1.

For Part 2 of the prioritization process, the thirteen recommendations were re-formulated into ten statements, as described above in the Procedure section. The rank ordering of these ten recommendations resulted in two clear priorities. They are as follows:

- Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.
- Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of parent/professional collaboration; family members from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be used as resources.

The rank order of the recommendations as a result of Part 2, and the mean rank order of each recommendation, are presented in Table 2.

Several of the participants noted on the prioritization forms, Parts 1 and 2, that they did not select recommendations that are mandates (e.g., assessment in student's primary language). It should be noted that it was the intent of Project FORUM to get feedback from the stakeholders on the impact of such mandates on the issue of disproportionate representation.

Table 1

Recommendations Selected by at Least 33 Percent of the Participants During Part 1

% Selected	Recommendation
79	Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment.
71	Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population.
58	Monitoring systems should be in place at the state and local levels to identify and investigate problems with disproportionality.
54	Funding structures should be flexible to create a seamless system of services that minimizes stigmatization. For example, Chapter 1 and special education funding should be blended to serve students with learning needs.
54	A non-categorical system of classification, which focuses on the identification of student needs and the provision of services to address those needs, should replace the current classification system.
50	Training should be provided in the area of parent/professional collaboration, and family members from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be used as resources.
46	Subject material (content) and instructional methods should be multicultural/multiethnic, so that they are relevant to all the students who make up the school population.
38	Training should be provided in the area of prereferral strategies.
38	Solutions to the problem of disproportionate representation should be identified through collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education, stakeholders, and other experts.
33	Research in the area of disproportionate representation should be disseminated to the field in an efficient and timely manner so that it can be used to drive problem solving and policy making in this area.
33	The states should collect special education enrollment data by gender, race/ethnicity.
33	Special education teachers and related service providers should collaborate with general educators to provide all services within the general education classroom.
33	Assessment should be conducted in the student's primary language.

Table 2

Mean Rankings of Recommendations During Part 2

Mean Ranking	Recommendation
3.45	Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.
3.70	Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of parent/professional collaboration; family members from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be used as resources.
5.00	Special education enrollment data should be collected by gender, race/ethnicity; and monitoring systems should be in place at the state and local levels to identify and investigate problems with disproportionality.
5.55	Assessment should be conducted in the student's primary language.
5.58	Funding structures should be flexible to create a seamless system of services that minimizes stigmatization. For example, Chapter 1 and special education funding should be blended to serve students with learning needs.
5.58	Subject material (content) and instructional methods should be multicultural/multiethnic, so that they are relevant to all the students who make up the school population.
5.63	A non-categorical system of classification, which focuses on the identification of student needs and the provision of services to address those needs, should replace the current classification system.
6.11	Special education teachers and related service providers should collaborate with general educators to provide all services within the general education classroom.
6.65	Solutions to the problem of disproportionate representation should be identified through collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education, stakeholders, and other experts.
7.20	Research in the area of disproportionate representation should be disseminated to the field in an efficient and timely manner so that it can be used to drive problem solving and policy making.

Note: Participants were asked to assign 1 to the recommendation they would give the most priority and 10 to the one they would give the least.

PART III

A POLICY FORUM TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS FOR HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals reviewed and commented on an earlier draft of Part III. Their efforts are greatly appreciated by the Project FORUM staff. Our acknowledgement of these individuals does not necessarily indicate their endorsement of the consolidated document.

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A POLICY FORUM TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS FOR HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose and Organization of the Policy Forum

Purpose of the Activity

The highest ranked recommendations, which resulted from Project FORUM's prioritization process, became the basis of the second Policy Forum on the topic of disproportionate representation. The purpose of this Forum was to develop an action agenda for implementation of the following two recommendations:

- Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

- Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of parent/professional collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

Preparation for the Policy Forum

Selection of Participants

Project FORUM and OSEP staff worked closely to identify participants who would represent different perspectives on the issue of disproportionate representation, and who had knowledge and experience in the specific topic areas of prereferral strategies, culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, and parent-professional collaboration. Invited participants included state directors of special education, university-based researchers, parents, advocates, local education agency administrators, teacher union representatives, and representatives from national associations. Three participants from the 1993 Policy Forum were invited to the 1994 Forum to provide continuity. In addition to several OSEP staff, the following U.S. Department of Education offices were represented: Civil Rights, Inspector General, and Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The list of participants can be found in Appendix D.

Background Materials

All participants received the documents from Project FORUM's 1993-94 activities on this topic either before or at the Policy Forum. In addition, participants received two articles that examined issues related to the focus of the Policy Forum. The articles are as follows:

Fletcher, T. & Cardona-Morales, C. (1990). Implementing effective instructional interventions for minority students. In A. Barona & E. Garcia (Eds.), *Children at risk: Poverty, minority status, and other issues in educational equity* (pp. 151-170). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychology.

Guild, P. (1994). The culture/learning style connection. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 16-21.

A complete list of the background materials provided to Policy Forum participants can be found in Appendix E.

Logistical Details

The Policy Forum was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Pentagon City, Arlington, VA on Thursday, August 25 and Friday, August 26, 1994. On Thursday, working sessions were held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. and on Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Process of the Policy Forum

Activities

The first morning of the Policy Forum began with a welcome by Joy Hicks, Project FORUM's director, and opening remarks by Thomas Hehir, Director, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education and Lou Danielson, Director, Division of Innovation and Development, OSEP. Drs. Danielson and Hehir provided background information about OSEP's work in the area of disproportionate representation, as well as reflections on other issues closely linked to the topics at hand (e.g., poverty, assessment, educational outcomes). Ms. Hicks followed these remarks with a review of the activities which led up to this Policy Forum and a statement about the goals of the Forum. Participant introductions followed.

The next section of the first morning was devoted to two speakers: Robert Solomon, from Baltimore City, Maryland Public Schools, who discussed current issues related to prereferral strategies and Beth Harry, from the University of Maryland, who spoke on home-school collaboration.

Following a short break, Joy Markowitz, Project FORUM Policy Analyst, outlined the workplan and ground rules for the Policy Forum. At this point, the group was divided into two work groups. Each group was assigned one of the priority recommendations. The small groups were assigned three tasks to complete over the next day and a half. They were to identify the following: 1) compelling reasons for implementation of the recommendation, 2) barriers to its implementation, and 3) steps to implementation, including party(ies) responsible and timelines. After each small group session, progress was reviewed by the entire group and changes made.

Due to time constraints, the group began delineating the steps to implementation, but were only able to identify critical components of an implementation plan. Party(ies) responsible and timelines were not addressed.

The complete agenda can be found in Appendix F.

Summary of Speakers' Remarks

The following summaries were prepared using written notes taken during the speakers' remarks.

Robert Solomon: Prereferral Strategies

In Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), approximately 18 percent of the students are identified as having a disability; this percentage far exceeds the national average. We can no longer afford to refer certain students because they frustrate us. But if these students do not get help, they drop out at a higher rate than average and their self-esteem lowers. This is especially a concern for culturally and linguistically diverse students who may already have low self-esteem.

General education teachers refer students for special education because they do not have the training necessary to work with students who have difficulty in the classroom; they see referral as their only option. To address this issue, BCPS developed the Consulting Teacher Model. A consulting teacher is a full time teacher-level educator, without classroom responsibilities. These teachers are trained in prereferral strategies and support all the educators in the school building. With this model in place, no student is referred for assessment without documentation that other strategies have been implemented, unless a parent signs off. If a parent signs off, "the assessment clock" start ticking.

One thing the teachers are taught is to describe behavior in behavioral terms (e.g., puts head on desk, off-task), not emotional ones (e.g., lazy, crazy). Next they refer to a computerized bank of proven strategies for the behaviors exhibited by that student. The goal is to replace the behavior of concern with something positive.

A School Support Team also promotes the prereferral effort. This team includes two or three general education teachers, one special educator, support staff, parent (if possible), custodian, and anyone else with good management ideas. The team members with classroom duties must have release time, because the team meets weekly during school hours. All students referred for assessment are intercepted by the School Support Team. Each student is discussed for only 20 minutes; they use a timer to keep to their schedule. The result of the meeting is a short-term plan (few weeks) for the teacher and student. The plan is basically a shortened version of an IEP, but it is completed by the School Support Team. Another meeting is held in

three weeks to review the initial plan. The student may be referred to special education at this time, or the initial plan may be revised.

The Consulting Teacher Model is effective because teachers receive personal attention; they are not just handed a manual and expected to figure out things on their own. We found that you must show teachers what needs to be done and, in this way, teachers learn what they did not learn in college. Anecdotal evidence indicates that teachers experience less frustration because they learn new classroom techniques. The year prior to the model's implementation, there were 1566 referrals to special education. The first year of its implementation there were 1047 referrals, a 33 percent decrease. We had only dared to hope for a 10 percent decrease.

BCPS initially funded this effort with Chapter 1 state compensatory funds. This year, with the enterprise concept and school-based management, each school has a choice whether they want the Consulting Teacher Model in their buildings. So far almost all schools have committed to this program.

[Mr. Solomon distributed the handout entitled, Success Tips for Effective Prereferral, which can be found in Appendix G, and made available for review the manual from the BCPS Consulting Teachers' Program. He also briefly described the following two programs, which they have found useful: RIDE Project - Respecting Individual Differences in Education from Colorado and COMP - Classroom Organization and Management Program from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.]

Beth Harry: Home-School Collaboration

Although there are two parts to Recommendation #2--multicultural training and families--I will focus on the latter. However, the strategies I suggest for improving home-school collaboration will not work unless we take a multicultural perspective. We need to look at cultural beliefs. I will address three multicultural underpinnings.

1. Cultural definition of disability - We operate as if disability categories have universal meaning; however, disability definitions are based on cultural decisions and values. Our definition of disability has a medical model origin, not an environmental one. We believe, for example, that learning disability (LD) means there is something wrong with the child. Using our statistical model, the student has LD if his/her achievement level deviates by "x" amount from his/her ability level, which constitutes more than a "normal deviation." However, the parameters of what is "normal" are different in different cultural groups, and the school's parameters may not match those of a particular cultural group. The result being that the family may not see "the disability" that the school sees.

2. Cultural beliefs about the family - We have a certain set of beliefs about family practices; for example, the way the family should act and patterns of authority. Our view of the family structure reflects our view of democracy as the American way of life. When we meet families that do not reflect this view and are more

authoritative, this is considered "not normal". Over the years, the courses I teach about families have become more practical and experience based. Students have to work with families, go into the home and community (e.g., go to church with them), to understand the family's perspective about the child. There is often initial resistance to this assignment on the part of the students and the supervising teacher. The teachers generally know nothing about the homes except what they see as they drive by. Their attitudes reflect widespread stereotypes that are held by many people in this society.

3. Culturally-based participation/communication styles - The law requires written permission for evaluation, notification of the results, involvement in discussion of IEP, notification of evaluations, etc. However, there is a discrepancy between intent of the law and how the law is generally implemented. We believe that if things are written, they are communicated; but families sign documents they don't understand. The written notice/letter serves more as an accountability tool than a communication one. Also, parents must be sent notices about conferences/meetings 10 days in advance, but, in reality, this often does not happen. Then parents have to miss work or be absent from conferences. Parent participation often decreases over time because they begin to feel their presence is pro forma. Parents say, "They don't ask me if I have time, don't ask me for any input; they just want me to sign the IEP." Another reason that parents stop going to meetings is that the only person the parent knows and trusts--the teacher--is often not present at the meeting. We have to structure meaningful opportunities for parental participation so that parents do not feel excluded.

Suggestions:

- Schools should be used as a community resource; they should be more than a place where the parents failed 20 years ago.
- PTAs should address special education issues. Parents of children with disabilities are usually off to the side solving their own problems.
- Parental advisory committees should be established to give on-going advice and information to parents.
- Parents should be given priority when hiring for school positions. In some compensatory education programs, such as Head Start, the law requires that parents be given such priority.
- Schools should hire from the community and seek community volunteers. Often there is no one in the school to take a telephone message in a language other than English. In most communities, there are people who would be very happy to be invited into the school two days a week to help with translation.

- Teachers should be in communication with the family before there is a need to refer a student to special education.

- Conference scheduling should be more flexible. In some school districts, the schools hold conferences during the evening hours to accommodate working parents, and close schools during the day to compensate teachers for their time.

- Families should be involved in the assessment process. Parents and family members can provide valuable information about family and developmental history, which is often not requested.

- Families should be involved in interventions.

- "Parent time" should be built into formal conferences. If parents know that they are on the agenda, their participation will increase. What typically happens now is that someone asks for parent comments at the end of a meeting that has been incomprehensible to the parents, or professionals ask parents about transportation matters only.

Outcomes of the Policy Forum

The following information was prepared using the notes taken on flip charts during small and large group sessions, and the minutes taken during large group discussions.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

During the course of the Policy Forum, there was recurrent discussion about the term "prereferral strategies." Many participants voiced concern about this term because it connotes a single act which precedes referral to special education rather than an on-going strategizing process to enhance learning. The term "intervention strategies" was recommended as a viable substitution and is used in the remainder of this document.

Compelling Reasons to Implement

- The demographics of our country and our schools are changing. The student population is becoming more linguistically, culturally and economically diverse and we must be prepared to educate students with a diverse set of learning strengths and needs. Intervention strategies promote flexibility in meeting the learning needs of all students.

- Due to an increasing scarcity of educational resources, educators must find ways to provide quality education in the general education setting.

- Intervention strategies fit well into reform and restructuring initiatives and mesh with the vision/mission statement in many jurisdictions to provide quality education for all students.

- Intervention strategies bring more resources to students without labeling. The intervention process is a preventative approach that supports students as the need arises, not just a way to delay or prevent a disability classification.

- Intervention strategies address the two main concerns voiced by teachers about students--diverse learning needs and behavior management.

- When a strong intervention process is in place, teachers know that they have support. This will attract personnel and prevent teacher burnout because it makes teaching a more gratifying experience.

- Intervention strategies facilitate the education of all students and are not the exclusive domain of special educators.

- This is a cost-effective way to serve students in general education classroom and avoid costly litigation.

- Intervention strategies promote interdisciplinary collaboration within the school and interagency coordination among other service providers.

- The intervention process is a learning experience for teachers and parents.

Barriers to Implementation

Attitudes and Perceptions

- It is human nature to resist change and new ideas.

- Public education changes slowly.

- Intervention strategies are not yet recognized as a benefit for all students.

- Many teachers take the stance that a student who cannot learn or behave like the others should be out of the classroom. This may represent a lack of shared ownership or negative attitudes about diversity.

- Intervention strategies are seen as another burdensome step in the special education process; they are another hurdle to jump before a referral can be made.

- Teachers do not feel empowered to do anything in their classroom about learning and behavior problems because their role is narrowly defined by training, credentials, practice and tradition.

- If a concept is not learned the first time, the student and/or teacher may be viewed as a failure; then the student must be passed on to a specialist. We do not make it easy for a teacher to get support or accept responsibility for student learning.

- There is a perception that more funding is needed to implement intervention strategies; little effort is made to use existing funds differently.

- There are territorial issues on the part of special and general educators--a student "belongs" to either special or general education.

Laws and Policies

- There is limited coordination regarding intervention strategies across the local, state, and federal levels.

- There are misconceptions about how procedural safeguards (e.g., timelines) operate in regard to students who are in need of different educational strategies or different types of support.

- Local and state policies often do not speak to the issue of intervention strategies.

- Directives come to the school level without long-term commitment in the form of guidelines, training and financial backing. Teachers may react negatively to what they perceive as "the program of the month."

- Management and funding systems were originally set up for a dual system--special and general education. These systems are now rigid and inflexible, and therefore, it is difficult to obtain resources to support students not classified as disabled.

- There is a lack of coordination between goals of state education agency (SEA) and legislature, as well as a lack of coordination between general and special education reform.

- There is a lack of involvement of institutions of higher education in education reform efforts.

- Traditionally special education has been a place rather than a set of services or educational strategies.

Time and Space

- Classroom teachers are overloaded and grappling with many responsibilities. They continue to get more to do without additional support.
- Class sizes are large in most schools.
- There is limited time for staff planning, meeting and consultation, particularly with related service staff (e.g., OT, PT, resource teacher, speech therapist); classroom teaching is very isolated work.
- The design and structure of current educational buildings/facilities do not foster coordination, consultation and collaboration.

Training and Staff Support

- Staff development/training is rarely school-wide and typically not on-going.
- Funds for staff development/training are limited.
- There is a lack of leadership and guidance from school boards and school-level administrators in the area of intervention strategies.
- Outdated methods of teacher training and credentialing exist. There is a need to teach more skills and less content, and provide more practicuum opportunities.
- Classroom teachers (novice and veteran) lack skills to strategize and problem-solve with their colleagues, using a consultative model.
- There is limited support and guidance for the novice teacher.
- There is a lack of coordination between institutions of higher education and public schools regarding training in this area.

Other

- The best teachers are traditionally placed in the best schools. The teachers most capable of implementing an intervention process are not in the schools where such a process is most needed.
- There is high teacher mobility and "burn-out" in some places.

- There is limited involvement of families and a lack of meaningful effort to increase parent involvement on the part of schools.

- There is limited dissemination of research and best practices in the area of intervention strategies, which prevents general educators from benefitting from the experiences of their colleagues.

- There is a paucity of research in the area of intervention strategies.

Critical Components of an Implementation Plan

- A national policy on children that stresses a commitment to educate all children, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- Revised Federal policy in all offices (e.g., Bilingual, Migrant, Civil Rights, Special Education Programs) which reflects an emphasis on the intervention process (Reauthorization may be the appropriate time to do this)

- Well-defined responsibilities for implementation at the Federal, state and local level

- On-going feedback from other national organizations and groups (e.g., National Association of State Boards of Education, Council for Exceptional Children, teacher unions)

- Flexible funding formulas which encourage jurisdictions to use intervention strategies

- Recognition of successful practices in the community and around the country on which to build future success

- User-friendly data collection systems to facilitate the intervention process

- State and local policy which is responsive to changing demographics and reflective of the intervention process

- Integration of the intervention process into existing and future education reform initiatives (e.g., Goals 2000) and reflection of this process in key documents (e.g., state and local plans, fiscal applications)

- A leadership and management structure at the school level that reflects shared ownership of all the students

- Assurances that families are an integral part of the intervention process, and that such a process does not preclude due process rights or procedural safeguards

- An in-service plan which empowers teachers and leads them to embrace the intervention process as "good teaching" for all students

- Redefined roles for specialists (e.g., reading teachers, behavior specialists, speech therapists), which reflect the philosophy of the intervention process, accompanied by training

- An overall in-service plan which meets the needs of the community and is supported by personnel and funds

- Longitudinal evaluation of the intervention process which is integrated into the overall school plan in order to avoid isolated and short-term initiatives

- Continued use of the problem-solving process during the eligibility and assessment stage, if a referral to special education is necessary

RECOMMENDATION #2: Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of home-school collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

As the small and large group discussion proceeded on Recommendation #2, the first part of the recommendation (Training should...heterogeneous student population) came to be referred to as "multicultural education." This term is used in the remainder of this document.

It is also important to note that during course of discussion on Recommendation #2, the phrase "home-school collaboration" replaced the original phrase "parent-professional collaboration." This change occurred because the word "home" more clearly reflects the demographic reality that the responsible adult in the home of many children is not necessarily a parent. The replacement of "professional" with "school" reflects the idea that collaboration should occur with the school as a cohesive entity, not with individual professionals.

The participants in this Policy Forum, particularly those in the small group working with Recommendation #2, felt that this recommendation covered two related, but distinct, issues--multicultural education and home-school collaboration. The latter issue was not covered as adequately as the former, and warrants more attention. The issues raised in regard to home-school collaboration are included below.

Compelling Reasons to Implement

- The student population in the United States is becoming more culturally, linguistically and economically diverse; however, our teaching force is not changing as quickly. Teachers need to be trained to work with our diverse student population.

- Our aging teaching force was trained in an era of less student diversity and fewer societal problems. Our current workforce must be re-trained, and our new workforce must be trained differently.

- Students who have a strong and positive ethnic self concept are more successful in school. Our ethnically diverse student population must succeed in school in order to enter the workforce ready to become contributing members of our society. Failure to prepare our students will result in loss of earnings, unemployment, societal unrest, and wasted human potential.

- Multicultural education enriches and benefits the school staff and community, not just students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- This recommendation is in the spirit of current educational reform and Goals 2000.

- The understanding of diverse cultures and ethnic groups will help schools build on and use the cultural resources in the community to improve education; this empowers the community. Every person and community has cultural resources.

- Multicultural education helps to eliminate stereotypes, increase respect, and enhance communication. Communication about educational strengths and needs is critical because disability definitions are culturally based; disparate definitions may lead to misunderstanding and conflict between home and school.

- Multicultural education helps people interpret conversation, information, behavior and learning styles effectively, and builds harmony among people.

- Home-school collaboration breaks down rigid roles and attitudes that professionals and families have about each other.

- Home-school collaboration creates an environment of mutual respect and support.

- Home-school collaboration is critical because we are a more litigious society than we were in the past. Training in this area may reduce court costs.

- Family involvement improves academic achievement and student behavior.

- Families have a great influence because children are only in school a small percentage of their time. Home-school collaboration maximizes the educational experience.

- Poverty has a negative effect on education; home-school collaboration can offset this effect significantly.

Barriers to Implementation

- The phrase "multicultural education" is often used, but there is no clear agreement on its definition.

- The phrase "multicultural education" has political connotations and generates negative reactions for some groups of people.

- There is a myth that multicultural education means acceptance of <u>all</u> behaviors from "other" cultures.

- Opposition to multicultural education can be very strong and well-organized.

- There is a certain ambivalence in our country about the education and integration of culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially documented and undocumented immigrants. Strong ethnocentric feelings exist in some communities.

- There is a lack of compatibility between the Federal immigration policy and multicultural education efforts.

- There is no national policy on children; therefore, no framework on which to implement this recommendation.

- Although there are many models of multicultural education, there is a paucity of data on outcomes.

- The composition of policy and decision-making boards do not reflect the diversity of their constituency.

- Teachers do not receive the professional respect they deserve; therefore, it is difficult for them to take on the challenge of working with a culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

- Family and community involvement is at best minimal in many communities.

- "Family involvement" is very narrowly defined and options for involvement are often limited. Families can foster educational progress in many different ways, not only volunteering at school or attending meetings.

- There is a myth that some culturally and linguistically diverse families, and poor families, do not value education.

- Conflicting priorities of families living in poverty interfere with home-school collaboration.

- Some families lack the skills necessary to advocate for their children, which interferes with home-school collaboration.

Critical Components of an Implementation Plan

- Federal and state policy on children that reflects a commitment to educate all children, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and prompts local school districts to develop policy

- Dissemination of information to the general public on the changing demographics of our communities and schools

- A clear definition of "multicultural education" (or whatever term is used)

- Community-developed objectives for multicultural education (e.g., to enhance self awareness; to discover how different cultural groups are similar and dissimilar in terms of views, practices and beliefs; to understand how culture influences how we live and view life events; and to develop cross-cultural competence)

- Meaningful inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse community members into the school to help dispel the notion of "the melting pot"

- Clearly-defined "multicultural skills" critical for different educational roles and future occupational success

- Recognition of effective models of multicultural education and home-school collaboration in the community and around the country

- A broadened definition of home-school collaboration and parent involvement, which includes one-on-one activities at home as well as school-based involvement

- Strengthened ties between institutions of higher learning and the community for the purpose of improved pre-service training in the areas of multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- State certification requirements which reflect the importance of multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- Comprehensive and on-going in-service training in the areas of multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- State and local funding for training initiatives, which links multicultural education to existing initiatives and requirements

- Locally-generated strategies to work with well-organized and loud, albeit small, opposition groups

- Grant application processes which reflect the commitment to multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- Integration of multicultural education and home-school collaboration into existing and future reform efforts

PART IV

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Project FORUM, under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), has been examining disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education for more than a year. Examination began with a Policy Forum in June of 1993, the purpose of which was to promote national dialogue on this complex topic. Following that Policy Forum, an analysis of state polices and practices was conducted, as well as a review of current research and theoretical positions. The major themes and recommendations from these initial three activities are synthesized in Part I of this document.

Thirty-five recommendations emerged from this synthesis, and formed a very comprehensive list of strategies for addressing the problem of disproportionate representation. However, this list was not a practical tool for policy development because the recommendations were not prioritized in any way. Project FORUM conducted a review and prioritization of these recommendations, which resulted in the following top-ranked recommendations:

- Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

- Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of home-school collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

These recommendations indicate strong support for preventative/pro-active measures to ameliorate disproportionate representation. In the spirit of Goals 2000, the highest priority recommendations address the educational needs of all children. Part II of this document describes the two-part prioritization process and results in more detail.

The second Policy Forum, held in August 1994, was convened to develop action plans for implementation of the top-ranked recommendations. Forum participants delineated compelling reasons to implement the recommendations and barriers to their implementation. Critical components of an implementation plan were also identified. Part III of this document contains the proceedings from that Policy Forum.

OSEP will continue to examine the issue of disproportionate representation, with the support of Project FORUM at NASDSE. Future activities will include case studies of states and districts that have implemented proactive and reaction strategies for addressing disproportionate representation. Project FORUM will identify effective implementation strategies which result in positive outcomes for all students. Future activities will continue to involve a broad group of stakeholders, who represent culturally and linguistically diverse students, including parents, teachers from general and special education, researchers, and federal, state and local policymakers.

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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APPENDIX A

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Participants in the Prioritization Process

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APPENDIX B

Part 1 Instrument

Part 1 Instrument

Please check (✓) the TEN recommendations which would be most likely to correct disproportionate representation.

Data Collection and Monitoring

☐ The Federal government should establish guidelines for determining disproportionate representation.

☐ The states should collect special education enrollment data by gender, race/ethnicity.

☐ Monitoring systems should be in place at the state and local levels to identify and investigate problems with disproportionality.

Addressing the Issue of Poverty

☐ Federal, state and local resources should be heavily weighted in favor of poor school districts in order to direct funds to where needs are the greatest.

☐ Funding structures should be flexible to create a seamless system of services that minimizes stigmatization. For example, Chapter 1 and special education funding should be blended to serve students with learning needs.

☐ Personnel should be recruited who are motivated to work with poor students, who have a unique set of learning strengths and needs.

School Reform

☐ A non-categorical system of classification, which focuses on the identification of student needs and the provision of services to address those needs, should replace the current classification system.

☐ Subject material (content) and instructional methods should be multicultural/multiethnic, so that they are relevant to <u>all</u> the students who make up the school population.

- ☐ Schools should use grade clusters rather than annual promotions because children develop/learn at different rates.
- ☐ Student groupings should be heterogenous in terms of abilities to facilitate learning as an interactional process.
- ☐ Special education, as a separate system of service delivery, should be replaced by a cadre of support services provided by special education personnel.
- ☐ Special education teachers and related service providers should collaborate with general educators to provide all services within the general education classroom.
- ☐ Measurable outcomes should be established for all children to help insure quality education.

Personnel Issues

- ☐ Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population.
- ☐ The ethnic/racial characteristics of the school staff should reflect the school population.
- ☐ Personnel with training in English as a Second Language (ESOL) should be available to support students learning English and new subject material.
- ☐ Training should be provided in the area of parent/professional collaboration, and family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.
- ☐ Training should be provided in the area of pre-referral strategies.

Assessment

- ☐ Pre-referral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment.
- ☐ A collaborative team approach should be used when assessment is indicated.

- ☐ Assessment should be conducted in the student's primary language.
- ☐ Parents should play a central role in the assessment process.
- ☐ Criterion-referenced, as opposed to norm-referenced, tests should be used during the assessment process.

Parent-School-Community Interaction

- ☐ School activities (e.g., conferences, meetings, presentations) should be scheduled around the availability of parents and other community residents.
- ☐ Communication from schools, both written and oral, should be in the languages of people in the community.
- ☐ State and federal governments should help local districts with the expenses incurred for translation.
- ☐ Schools should support and collaborate with the community by becoming resource centers which offer an array of services.
- ☐ Parents and community representatives should be involved in <u>all</u> school activities, including policy making.

Collaboration and Research

- ☐ Solutions to the problem of disproportionate representation should be identified through collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education, stakeholders, and other experts.
- ☐ Research in the area of disproportionate representation should be disseminated to the field in an efficient and timely manner so that it can be used to drive problem solving and policy making in this area.
- ☐ More research should be conducted in the area of disproportionate representation in the mild disability groups.

☐ More research should be conducted to determine the representation of minority ethnic/racial groups in low incidence disability classifications (e.g., sensory impairments, severe/profound mental retardation).

☐ More research should be conducted to determine the educational outcomes of all students in special education.

☐ Persons from minority ethnic/racial groups should be involved in the review of research and demonstration grant applications.

Comments or additional recommendations:

APPENDIX C

Part 2 Instrument

Part 2 Instrument

Please RANK ORDER the ten recommendations below, using #1 to indicate the recommendation you would give the most priority and #10 to indicate the one you would give the least.

____ Special education enrollment data should be collected by gender, race/ethnicity; and monitoring systems should be in place at the state and local levels to identify and investigate problems with disproportionality.

____ Funding structures should be flexible to create a seamless system of services that minimizes stigmatization. For example, Chapter 1 and special education funding should be blended to serve students with learning needs.

____ A non-categorical system of classification, which focuses on the identification of student needs and the provision of services to address those needs, should replace the current classification system.

____ Subject material (content) and instructional methods should be multicultural/multiethnic, so that they are relevant to all the students who make up the school population.

____ Special education teachers and related service providers should collaborate with general educators to provide all services within the general education classroom.

____ Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of parent/professional collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

____ Pre-referral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

____ Assessment should be conducted in the student's primary language.

____ Solutions to the problem of disproportionate representation should be identified through collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education, stakeholders, and other experts.

____ Research in the area of disproportionate representation should be disseminated to the field in an efficient and timely manner so that it can be used to drive problem solving and policy making.

APPENDIX D

Participant List for Policy Forum

Participant List for Policy Forum

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APPENDIX E

Background Materials for Policy Forum

Fletcher, T. & Cardona-Morales, C. (1990). Implementing effective instructional interventions for students. In A. Barona & E. Garcia (Eds.), *Children at risk: Poverty, status, and other issues in educational equity* (pp. 151-170). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychology.

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Harry, B. (1994). *The disproportionate representation of students in special education: Theories and recommendations.* (Deliverable 5-1-1). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Lara, J. (1994). *State data collection and monitoring procedures regarding overrepresentation of students in special education.* (Deliverable 6-1-3). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Project FORUM at NASDSE. (1993). *Disproportionate participation of students from ethnic and cultural minorities in special education classes and programs: Forum to examine current policy.* (Deliverable 9-1-1). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Project FORUM at NASDSE. (1994). *Disproportionate representation of students from ethnic/racial groups in special education: A synthesis of major themes and recommendations.* (Deliverable 5-2-2). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

APPENDIX F

Agenda for Policy Forum

Agenda

Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education:

A Policy Forum to Develop Action Plans For High Priority Recommendations

August 25-26, 1994

Thursday, August 25, 994

8:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome *Joy Hicks - Director, Project FORUM*
	Opening Remarks *Thomas Hehir - Director, Office of Special Education Programs* *Lou Danielson - Director, Division of Innovation and Development*
9:15 - 9:30	Background and Goals for the Forum *Joy Hicks*
9:30 - 9:45	Participant Introductions
9:45 - 10:30	Introduction of Speakers *Joy Hicks*
	Overview and Insights into Priority Recommendations *Robert Solomon - Coordinator, Professional Development Programs for Special Education/Consulting Teachers Baltimore City Public Schools, MD* *Beth Harry - Assistant Professor, University of MD*
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:00	Work Plan, Ground Rules & Small Group Composition *Joy Markowitz - Policy Analyst, Project FORUM*

11:00 - 12:15	Identification of Compelling Reasons & Barriers (small groups)
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 1:45	Large Group Input on Compelling Reasons & Barriers *Joy Hicks*
1:45 - 3:15	Action Strategies/Steps to Implementation (small groups)
3:15 - 3:30	Break
3:30 - 4:15	Large Group Input on Action Strategies *Joy Markowitz*
4:15 - 4:45	Wrap-up for the Day & Forum Logistics *Lyn Sweetapple - Administrative Assistant, Project FORUM* *Joy Markowitz*
Evening	Optional Group Dinner

Friday, August 26, 1994

8:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Opening Remarks *Martha Fields - Executive Director, NASDSE*
	Plan for the Day *Joy Markowitz*
9:15 - 10:30	Finalize Action Plan: Identify party responsible & timeline (small groups)
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:30	Large Group Input on Action Plan *Joy Markowitz*
11:30 - 12:00	Final Wrap-up *Joy Hicks*

APPENDIX G

Success Tips for Effective Prereferral

SUCCESS TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PREREFERRAL

Prepared by Robert Solomon - Baltimore City Public Schools

1. Make certain that the school building administrators have stated a clear, undeniable policy regarding the necessity, sequence and procedures associated with prereferral activities **and** that their actions support their policy.

2. Someone in the building **must** be assigned the basic responsibility of taking the lead to drive the procedures and to assist general education teaching staff in the implementation of alternative instructional and behavioral strategies, even if on a part-time basis.

3. Identify the right "mix" of staff to reside on the School Support Team (SST) that will meet on a weekly basis to intercept cases that are on their way to special education assessment for the development of a three week intervention plan (e.g. RIDE Action Plan).

4. Have the team demonstrate the actual meeting timing and outcomes for all to see and further discuss.

5. Include everyone in the school community in the process from the inception (e.g., paraprofessionals, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria staff, parents, and business partners).

6. Send information home to parents about the availability of assistance to **them** through the SST and the alternative tactics.

7. Make the process as easy and appealing to teaching staff as possible like minimizing paperwork, forms, and time consumption -- it is not a sign of weakness!

8. **Always** schedule follow-up meetings to discuss the initial outcomes of alternative interventions, most usually three weeks, and make expectations **reasonable.**

9. Encourage the them of "Our Kids" not "Your Kids".

10. Provide as much staff development as possible on diversity of student learning modalities, behavioral coping styles, and proper behavioral descriptions for desensitization purposes.

11. Begin to make staff aware of the impact of **their** behavior in relation to student behavior and that the world has changed somewhat (e.g. media, drug culture, family unit variations, cultural variations, etc.).